



DEC News Release

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
410 Willoughby St., Juneau, AK 99801-1795
Phone: (907) 465-5066 Fax: (907) 465-5070
www.state.ak.us/dec/

Contact: Nancy Napolilli at (907) 269-7583

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September is food safety education month—wash your hands!

September 12, 2003— Governor Frank Murkowski has proclaimed September to be Food Safety Education Month in Alaska. As part of the campaign, the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Alaska Food Safety Advisory Committee are encouraging teachers to instruct their students in the art of handwashing.

Teacher illness costs school districts time and money. Students can transmit germs to teachers, other students, and family members. The common cold is the main cause of teacher and student illnesses and lost school days, often preventable by proper handwashing.

“Handwashing is the most important way to keep from getting sick,” said Nancy Napolilli of the Department of Environmental Conservation. Napolilli said a study of Detroit school children showed that scheduling handwashing four times a day decreased gastrointestinal related absences by more than 50 percent. “Handwashing has been proven to decrease absenteeism,” she said.

To assist teachers and encourage their participation in “National Food Safety Education Month,” the DEC Food Safety & Sanitation Program and Alaska Food Safety Advisory Committee distributed educational materials to Alaska’s teachers and posted them online at www.state.ak.us/dec/deh (click on Food Safety Education Month). Teachers can download handwashing lessons for K-3 and 4-6, lesson guides, germ characters, as well as activity sheets and other valuable information. Parents are encouraged to take advantage of the materials as well, and follow good handwashing habits.

-###-